

Town of Mineral Springs
Rolling Hills Country Club
2722 W Roosevelt Boulevard ~ Monroe, NC
Town Council Retreat
Special Meeting
Joint Session with the Mineral Springs Planning Board
January 20, 2015 ~ 8:00 AM

Minutes

The Town Council of the Town of Mineral Springs, North Carolina, met in Special Session at the Rolling Hills Country Club at 2722 W Roosevelt Boulevard in Monroe, North Carolina, at 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday, January 20, 2015. This was a joint session with the Mineral Springs Planning Board.

Present: Mayor Frederick Becker III, Mayor Pro Tem Janet Critz, Councilman Jerry Countryman, Councilwoman Valerie Coffey, Councilwoman Lundeen Cureton, Wanda Moore, Councilwoman Peggy Neill, Town Clerk/Zoning Administrator Vicky Brooks and Deputy Town Clerk/Tax Collector Janet Ridings, Donna Sherrin.

Absent: Councilwoman Melody LaMonica, Mike LaMonica and Bettylyn Krafft.

Visitors: Facilitators Nadine Bennett and Emily Parker.

With a quorum present Mayor Frederick Becker called the Retreat Special Meeting of the Town Council on January 20, 2015 to order at 8:32 a.m.

With a quorum present Chairwoman Valerie Coffey called the Retreat for the Planning Board of January 20, 2015 to order at 8:34 a.m.

1. Gather and Breakfast Snacks

- Centralina Council of Governments facilitators Nadine Bennett and Emily Parker introduced themselves. It was noted that Ms. Parker was associated with UNCC when the original Mineral Springs Land Use Plan was put into place.

2. Welcome, Introductions & Agenda Adoption

- Council members introduced themselves and stated how long they had served as a councilmember, where they came from and if they had served on any other town boards.
- Ms. Bennett and Ms. Parker went over the ground rules of the retreat: keep focused, pay attention, respect comments, listen to others and work together. The facilitators were there to make sure the council members and planning board members stayed on schedule.

3. **Team Building Exercise**

- Ms. Bennett and Ms. Parker introduced the “Newspaper of the Future” exercise and explained that the group will answer the question “what you would like to see about the Town of Mineral Springs and their accomplishments in the newspaper article 30 years down the road”. The facilitators went around the room and allowed everyone to read their responses. Those responses included:
 - ♦ Greenspace preservation / Innovative downtown design
 - ♦ Annual festival / Land use plan in place / maintain low tax rate
 - ♦ Sewer – 2014 (on Highway 75) / Investment in Human Resources
 - ♦ Signage downtown
 - ♦ Restaurants downtown
 - ♦ New city hall
 - ♦ Rural character intact
 - ♦ Steeplechase
 - ♦ Parks for all / Greenway
 - ♦ Worship for all
 - ♦ Accessible local government
 - ♦ Continuous improvement
- The headlines would read:
 - ♦ Celebration
 - ♦ Conservation
 - ♦ Great Place to Live and Call Home
 - ♦ Rural Integrity and Quality of Life
 - ♦ Oasis in a Desert of Suburban Development
- Ms. Bennett commented that even after all these years the town council and the planning board have all stuck to their beliefs and everyone was on the same page.

4. **Discussion of Mineral Springs Festival**

- The council agreed to have a festival again on September 19, 2015. It was noted that attendance at the 2014 festival was approximately 600. When a “show of hands” was taken on how the festival would be done, all but one council member raised their hands for the festival to be done “in-house” by staff. Advertising for the 2015 festival needs to be improved over what was done in 2014. Discussion led to not hiring a band, but to have local musicians to provide entertainment throughout the festival. Everyone was in favor of the opening ceremony with the Parkwood High School Band. It was noted that the kid’s games were outsourced to the Methodist Church; they also involved the Girl Scouts and did a great job.
- Continued discussion of the 2014 festival included that the nonprofits were thrilled with the outcome and wanted to be part of the next one. The vendor survey forms were sent out and several suggestions were sent back, one of which was “improved advertising”. A couple of the vendors ran out of food, which will be addressed for the next festival. The raffles for door prizes were well received, as was the lady that brought the llamas and the Boy Scouts selling popcorn. Mr. Muhammad had autographed pictures and football/basketball games that he and his family were doing.

- The projected budget was \$3,500 – income was \$1,630 and expenses were \$2,953 leaving a net cost to the town of \$1,323. The sign budget will need to be increased this year, because we will need to have more signs to put out – especially at the corner.
- The council agreed that they did not want a “political tent” for “politicking”; it was noted that this is an election year. The tent for the council will be designated at the “Town Tent”. If politicians want to walk around and hand out business cards - that will be okay, but there will be no politicking or tent for the candidates.

5. Discussion Policies and Guidance for Town Staff

- Code Enforcement was discussed in regards to Zoning Administrator Vicky Brooks driving around town. The council had previously directed Ms. Brooks to act upon notification received in writing, while some residents thought the she should be out riding around town enforcing the zoning ordinance. After a lengthy discussion, it was determined that what Ms. Brooks was presently doing are the wishes of the council. Therefore, if Ms. Brooks receives something in writing she will act upon it; however, Ms. Brooks will check with the town attorney to see if a phone call constitutes enough communication to act on it. It was noted that if someone submits something in writing it can be signed “anonymous”, but when a phone call is received the caller usually identifies themselves when Ms. Brooks answers the phone and the same goes with an email; their identity can be requested by the violator. The council also expressed concerns about the safety of Ms. Brooks if she were to go out riding around town looking for zoning violations; there are some pretty remote pieces of property in town and some people have long driveways, so violations are not easy to spot from the street. Safety was a concern; therefore, written complaints are the best way to go.
- There was discussion about a policy manual for the Finance Officer, as well as a spending policy, because there is nothing written down. The town needs to have more written policies and procedures for each job description with the addition of vacation and sick time. There are a lot of “gray” areas when it comes to some issues, such as “how much time does an employee get for vacation and sick time”; are they even eligible for vacation and sick time; this needs to all be spelled out in policies and procedures.

6. 2014 Community Survey

- Mayor Becker explained that the town had a demographic shift; more aging population, people are not moving away, they are staying in their homes. The facilitators went around the room and asked each person what they would like to see for the future of Mineral Springs. The majority of the responses were low taxes, clean up downtown, keep the same rural quality of life and agriculture. Councilman Countryman expressed concerns over the fact that the population seems to think the council has the ability to make the downtown look better and get it cleaned up. We have a divided community in that some like us and some do not. The council has made a commitment and is going in the right direction.
- Ms. Parker asked what public forum the town had for the residents. The responses were public comments at the monthly council meeting, newsletters, coffee with the mayor, website and the festival was a great way to communicate with the public. A Facebook page was discussed, but could create a public record nightmare; it would

require a policy. Ms. Brooks will talk with Brett Vines from the county IT Department to get some background information on establishing a Facebook page.

- Ms. Bennett was surprised at the small response to the last survey on the Survey Monkey; 90% was mailed back, which explains the aging population in the town.
- Ms. Brooks suggested that the business owners in downtown get together and form a committee to look at downtown and what they can do to make it better. This would not be a town function, because of open meetings law. One of the downtown business owners will have to be the champion of this committee with a town liaison, but it wouldn't be a town function. This committee could submit thoughts and ideas to the town about what they would like to see in the downtown core; it is at least a place to start.
- Ms. Parker asked about the types of businesses the council and planning board would like to see downtown. Several suggestions were given, but research would have to be done prior to search or recruitment methods being put into place. Some rehabilitation of properties downtown would have to take place before anything could even begin. The overall consensus for new businesses was dry cleaners, beauty shop, grocery store, small restaurants and a bank. Harris Teeter has not made any commitment to what may eventually be put on their property, which is a long-term project. Mr. Kaltsounis has submitted an application for a permit to reface the downtown strip shopping center, which has the potential for an restaurant and a few office spaces, but at the present time the building is in bad shape and not functional. If Mr. Kaltsounis does the reface, the parking lot would be upgraded with islands, landscaping and entrances (already approved by the Department of Transportation).
- The Shannon property on Highway 75 had an evaluation done on it by Duke Energy and if a suitable business were to move in it would create jobs and economy for the town. If the economy changes, things may begin to happen.
- Sidewalks downtown were discussed. If the property is developed, sidewalks would be going in. There are small neighborhoods on Potter, Eubanks, Helen and Charlton Oaks that do not have sidewalks; that consists of about 500 people that could use sidewalks. As developers develop, they will happen, but residents that have homes on Highway 75 will not be required to put in sidewalks. Sidewalks in the downtown were listed on the survey and may need to be discussed in a forum setting; they have been referred to as the "bridge to nowhere".

7. Park Planning

- Mayor Becker explained that the town has a significant investment in the greenway and in 2014 they bought additional property for the greenway in hopes of adding to the amenities of the greenway in the form of future bathrooms and a picnic area. Councilman Countryman was in favor of long-term development (five years) in these areas, but feels there are more important issues that need the council's attention. Other council members felt this should be a short-term plan and would like to see those amenities before the five years. There is a possibility of using portable bathroom facilities until there are enough funds in the bank to construct these items on the wish list. An Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance issue will have to be resolved before anything else can be done at the greenway.
- The town hall park was discussed and the facilitator advised the town to hire a consultant. The proposed park will be 50 feet wide and 250 feet deep; approximately 15,000 square feet or 1/3rd of an acre. It will be located on the town

hall property, which is downtown so it can be used by a variety of people. There seemed to be a consensus of the council and planning board members that they would like to see a fenced area of play equipment for kids, benches, picnic tables, access to a water fountain and access to a bathroom (portable). The council requested a proposal with a timeframe be presented at the February meeting.

- Discussion of the Community Center included an overall vision that it would be used for family reunions, small wedding receptions, birthday parties, senior events, Girl and Boy Scout meetings and private events. The work inside would be extensive, which would include raising the floor in the rear of the building, redoing all of the floors, installing bathrooms, kitchen and a small office. The fee would need to cover the cost of the building and the continued maintenance of the building; a fee schedule would need to be created. There would be no alcohol since it is on town property. Mayor Becker explained that the net worth of the town account was \$657,000 on the December statement and it should be \$700,000 by the end of 2015. The facilitator suggested that the community center and the park planning should both be on the same timeline and the town should get started on it.

8. Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

- The CIP would cover spending over a 10 year period. Councilman Countryman stated the town has never put a plan together; the town collects the money, it goes into the bank until somebody comes up with a plan to spend it. We have never had a plan for 10, 15 and 20 years, nor have we ever borrowed money. There are future plans, but they have never been written down. The town has guidance from the finance officer and surveys, which plans are created from. The Institute of Government has a CIP book, which does appear online or it can be purchased. Mayor Becker would like to obtain a copy of that book for background information; the council agreed to that before they would vote on whether the staff writes the CIP or hires COG to do it. It is possible that staff could present something to the council with guidance from COG or COG could write it with staff input. This will be discussed at the February meeting.

9. Review of Goals & Action Items and Final Thoughts

- Ms. Bennett and Ms. Parker reviewed the goals and action items:
 - ♦ Downtown business owners get together – the town will start this, but will not take it over; need a leader.
 - ♦ Call Mr. Kaltsounis to see what his plans are for the strip building property.
 - ♦ Contact COG for best practices downtown.
 - ♦ Discussions for the festival and information.
 - ♦ Need a town seal.
 - ♦ Ask attorney about campaigning at festival.
 - ♦ Festival will be in-house – communications/media plan
 - ♦ Festival will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
 - ♦ Attorney – policies and code enforcement (inquire about phone calls)
 - ♦ Signs in right-of-way can be picked up by all.
 - ♦ Job description – policy manual for each.
 - ♦ Union County Environmental Health – inquire about septic for community center.
 - ♦ Draft a Request for Proposal (RFP) for park.

- ♦ Aligning park and community center.
- ♦ Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) – staff begins process.

10. **Adjournment**

- **Councilwoman Critz** made a **motion** to adjourn the retreat and **Councilman Countryman** seconded. *The motion passed unanimously as follows:*

Ayes: Countryman, Coffey, Critz, Cureton and Neill
Nays: None

- The retreat was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Vicky A. Brooks, CMC, NCCMC, Town Clerk

Frederick Becker III, Mayor